The Wellbeing Priori-Tea

'Conversations & connection for mental health & wellbeing'

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH ACT

ACT Government | healthier work

mental health
community coalition ACT

THE WELLBEING PRIORI-TEA

Thank you for registering to host a
Wellbeing Priori-Tea for Mental Health Month.

We have created this resource, together with Mentally Healthier Workplaces ACT, to support and encourage workplaces to be more focused on mental health of their staff and practices.

In this Guide:

- **Wellness Check-in Activity for the Workplace**

This activity from The University of Utah is a great way to start your Wellbeing Priori-Tea and connect with staff and their wellbeing.

- **Mental Health Month Workplace Wellbeing Resource**

This resource explores early intervention, stress management, small business, supports and services and tackling stigma and discrimination in workplaces.

- **Mental Health at Work - Healthier Work**

This resource from Mentally Healthier Workplaces ACT explores what makes a mentally healthier workplace, and the benefits to employees and employers, promoting mental health at work and provides a plan of action and links to further resources.

WELLNESS CHAMPIONS

Using Check-in Questions to Promote Well-being

Using prompts to check-in during meetings, team huddles, hand-offs, etc. is a simple way to help each other reconnect to purpose, be more present and focused, connect to each other, and be more engaged at work. Checking-in also creates time and space to process events and experiences in a helpful, adaptive way.

HOW TO LEAD A CHECK-IN

1. **Have every person check-in one by one.** This tends to work well if the group is smaller than 14 people or if you have ample time to check-in.

2. **Have the group break-up into pairs or groups of 3-4 people and converse for 5-10 minutes.** This works well for groups consisting of 15+ individuals. When the whole group comes back together, you can
   - request for a few people to share
   - ask for highlights from each group
   - ask what it was like to connect this way for a few minutes

FACILITATION SUGGESTIONS

1. **Be sure to note the context of the situation and the general mood of the room.** You want to ensure that your check-in question fits with current circumstances.

2. **Note what kind of experience you want the group to have with the check-in.** Is it time to be silly, inspired, grateful, etc.?

3. **Consider how much time you have for the check-in** and what parameters you need to set in order for the group to participate. For instance, you can use the prompts,

   - "in one or two words..."
   - "In one or two sentences...."
   - "Taking a couple of minutes each..."

Script for Introducing a Check-in

Let's do a check-in.

The prompt for today is _____ (choose from the list below).

Everyone pause for a moment to think of your response and what you would want to share with each other. Please remember that you do not have to check-in and can simply say "pass" when it's your turn.

Sample Check-in Questions

- What is a high and a low from the day?

- Share one thing that is going on in your life (personal or professional.)

- What is one thing that went well (yesterday, during your shift, etc.)?

- What is one thing that you are grateful for right now?

- What is one thing you are going to do for yourself (during your shift, after you leave, etc.)?

- Give a shout out to yourself and a shout out to someone on the team.

- What is something that you want to remember or remind yourself during your shift/ workday today?

- What is one thing that is currently giving you hope?

Find the complete step-by-step guide online at:
accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/explore/wellness

HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

WORKPLACE WELLBEING

Protecting and maintaining mental wellbeing in the workplace is an important piece of the community mental health puzzle. People may spend up to a third of their week at work, so creating a safe and supportive workplace is key to mental wellbeing across the community.

In short, mentally healthy workplaces prevent harm, promote a positive culture, protect wellbeing and provide support. A workforce in good mental health also boosts productivity and engagement – producing win-win benefits for employers and employees.

The key elements that foster positive mental health in the workplace are:

Informed leadership that values prevention and early intervention
Educating organisations and employers about mental illness facts helps to build community awareness and reduce the stigma associated with harmful mental illness myths. Since mental health problems are common in the community, positive workplace attitudes towards mental illness can encourage early help-seeking and improve recovery outcomes for affected employees. Research also shows that tailored training has a positive impact on employers' confidence in managing staff with mental health problems and the promotion of a positive, healthy workplace culture.

For more information about mental health and the workplace go to –

www.headsup.org.au

www.comcare.gov.au/safe-healthy-work/mentally-healthy-workplaces/mental-health-stigma

Stress management and maintaining healthy workplaces
Both employers and employees contribute to maintaining healthy workplaces and workplace cultures. Together managers and their teams can create positive and inclusive workplaces that both value individuals and meet organisational objectives.

Employers need to be mindful of the impact of excessive workplace demands and poor communication on employees' physical and psychological wellbeing.

Employees should be empowered to advocate for reasonable workloads and responsibilities, and to negotiate reasonable adjustments in periods of mental or physical ill-health. As noted above, good workplace morale and support translates into high levels of employee engagement and productivity.

Here is a short resource on mentally healthy workplaces –
www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/heads-up_seven-actions-to-create-a-mentally-healthy-workplace.pdf?sfvrsn=5c1d214d_2

Small business and Covid-19 impacts
Small business owners face unique challenges when managing their own mental health. A new government resource has been developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of people working in small business - aheadforbusiness.org.au/resources/creating-a-mentally-healthy-small-business

In order to sustain positive mental health small business owners benefit from acknowledging the importance of good mental health and to understand the factors that can undermine it. Excessive work hours and a lack of separation between work and home life tend to create chronic stress and make people more vulnerable to anxiety and depression. Taking proactive steps to set reasonable expectations and boundaries can be key to improving the wellbeing of people in small business.

The impact of Covid-19 on the operation and viability of many small businesses is an additional burden business owners now face. Commonwealth and ACT financial aid is now available for businesses suffering significant losses. In addition, a suite of mental health education resources has been developed by the National Mental Health Commission and the Black Dog Institute to help address the stressors created by the pandemic.

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/coronavirus-resources-for-anxiety-stress/managers-workers

www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/mental-health-reform/national-workplace-initiative/mentally-healthy-workplaces-during-covid-19

Accessible and affordable supports and services
Mentally healthy workplaces offer support and access to services early when their employees are experiencing mental health difficulties. Many workplaces have an employee counselling program that offers confidential support in times of stress and illness. Access to this service needs to be easy and timely, ensuring that support is provided when it is needed. In addition, there is a range of online prevention and intervention programs, many of which are free or low cost, that have demonstrated effectiveness in supporting people's management of and recovery from anxiety and depression. The benefits of digital programs also include the flexibility of delivery – modules can be completed anywhere at your own pace - and enhanced privacy.

Proven and popular digital programs to address mild to moderate mental health problems include –

moodgym.com.au

www.thiswayup.org.au

www.ecouch.com.au

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/digital-tools-apps/mycompass

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/digital-tools-apps/headgear

Protection from workplace discrimination and tackling stigma
People with mental health problems have the same rights and responsibilities in the workplace as everyone else in the community. This means that organisations and employers cannot discriminate against someone on the basis of their mental illness and instead have a duty to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace to accommodate a worker's needs. In addition, workers do not have to disclose a mental health condition to employers unless it has a material impact on their role.

Tackling mental illness stigma is a vital aspect of non-discrimination in the workplace. Open, informed and diverse workplaces demonstrate acceptance of mental illness as a common human experience and encourage employees at all levels of an organisation to value mental wellbeing, promote a mentally healthy environment and provide support to those experiencing problems.

For an overview of anti-discrimination provisions relating to the workplace go to –
www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/legal-rights-and-responsibilities

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MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

Mental health challenges can be experienced by all of us and can include temporary difficulties associated with the normal stressors of life, such as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental illness, where a person is experiencing a mental health condition, is experienced by one in six working aged people. Regardless of whether we are feeling mentally well, experiencing mental health challenges, or mental illness, the role of workplaces in supporting and promoting good mental health is a vital one.

Mental illness is now the leading cause of sickness, absence, and long-term work incapacity in Australia. Each year $543 million is paid in workers' compensation for work-related mental health conditions (Safe Work Australia).

Workplaces not only have obligations to employees around mental health under the *Work Health and Safety Act* but also have much to gain from cultivating mentally healthy environments.

Benefits to workers

Research tells us that being in work is a social determinant of health. That means that just being in work can be good for our health. However, the quality of work that we do is important – good work is good for our mental health.

"'Good work' is healthy and safe work where the hazards and risks created by the work are eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practical and where the work design optimises human performance, productivity and job satisfaction." Safe Work Australia

Our performance at work and the quality of our workplace (including the support we are provided) can be closely linked to our physical and mental health. Work that is good has benefits for our mental health and wellbeing.

Benefits to workplaces

How can workplaces hope to benefit from such an approach? Through improved worker engagement, increased productivity and performance, reductions in worker health and safety claims and attrition rates, just to name a few of the benefits. In other words, they can expect to gain a thriving business, a place where people can do their best and be their best.

The bottom line for business is that every dollar spent on evidence-informed interventions to improve mental health and wellbeing brings a return of up to $14 in reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and reduction in compensation claims (Black Dog Institute).

MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

What makes a mentally healthier workplace?

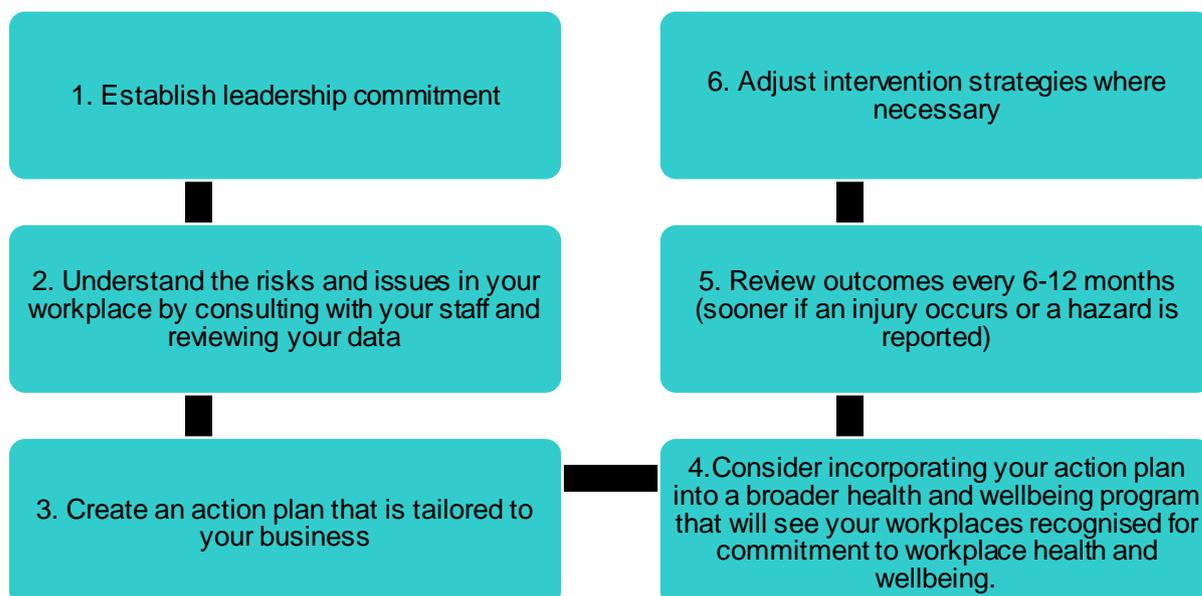Mentally healthier workplaces design work and support people in their work by ensuring that:

- people are protected from harm to their mental health;
- the work and workplaces promote good mental health; and
- people are supported to continue to contribute to and engage with work when they are experiencing mental health conditions.

In other words, being a mentally healthy workplace is not just about providing employees with access to Employee Assistance Programs, holding social events or sharing links to supports like Beyond Blue, although these initiatives do have their place. It's about ensuring that the systems that people work in, the types of work they do and the processes these jobs involve, are designed to not only prevent harm but to improve and sustain mental health and wellbeing, as well as support us to recover and continue to participate during mental illness.

Managers have a particularly important leadership role to play, not only through monitoring the health of workers but by good role modelling and by nurturing healthy organisational cultures: where people feel valued and supported; where there is a sense of belonging, open communication and respect; and where people are supported through early intervention and recovery. Our leaders need to be appropriately trained and supported to play such a role.

A plan of action

There are six steps to becoming a mentally healthier organisation:

1. Establish leadership commitment

6. Adjust intervention strategies where necessary

2. Understand the risks and issues in your workplace by consulting with your staff and reviewing your data

5. Review outcomes every 6-12 months (sooner if an injury occurs or a hazard is reported)

3. Create an action plan that is tailored to your business

4. Consider incorporating your action plan into a broader health and wellbeing program that will see your workplaces recognised for commitment to workplace health and wellbeing.

MENTAL HEALTH
AT WORK

Promoting mental health at work

Every workplace is different and requires a tailored approach, however, there are six actions that can set your organisation on the path to creating a mentally healthier workplace.

1) Design jobs to minimise harm

The health and wellbeing of a workplace can be enhanced by minimising the impact of risk factors and maximising the impact of protective factors in the way jobs are done. Good job design strategies include providing clear instructions on expectations at work, seeking and valuing worker input into the work they do, ensuring workers have the resources they need, and developing your people so that they continue to learn and grow. One easy strategy is ensuring regular team catch ups where expectations on work outputs are made clear and workers have an opportunity to provide input into how work is achieved and any challenges they may face.

Consider individual worker factors, such as whether workers are juggling work and home life demands, and operational factors, such as the interaction employees have with clients/customers, shift work implications and rostering (e.g. avoiding long shifts). It's also important to ensure the work environment itself is set up to promote good work and concentration for the task at hand, such as making sure the lighting is appropriate and it is not too noisy.

Check out Safe Work Australia's Good Work Design Handbook and the Future of Work Institute's Thrive at Work initiative for more information.

2) Promote positive factors

Consider a range of actions that can support the mental health of your staff by contributing to a positive workplace culture. These actions may include providing training that builds leaders' capability to promote and manage mental health of workers and training for workers to increase their mental health literacy. If you haven't already, your workplace can also develop a 12-month health and wellbeing plan with free support from Healthier Work to promote positive factors in your workplace, including strategies to reduce sedentary behaviours and increase opportunities for safe physical activity.

3) Provide information, resources and strategies

Provide information to help individuals practice self-care, seek help when needed and better manage work-related stressors and challenges. There is a range of external sources of mental health information, supports and helpful tools. Smiling Mind (website and app) is one example of free tools you can promote – teaching mindfulness meditation, which can help staff take a pre-emptive approach to promoting wellbeing, as well as managing their mental health, stress and emotions in the workplace.

4) Intervene early

Evidence shows that early support improves outcomes from mental illness. Encourage staff to get support early when they need it (through your EAP or external supports, such as GPs, Lifeline or Beyond Blue) and develop skills of leaders around mental health and suicide prevention. Consider staff training needs and opportunities, including suicide prevention gatekeeper training (such as Question, Persuade Refer) or peer support initiatives.

5) Support recovery

The notion that a worker needs to be fully recovered before they can return to work is outdated. In most cases, early return to work can play a significant part in a person's overall recovery. Explore what resources are available in your organisation to support workers recovering from mental illness. Talk to the impacted worker about what they need to identify and implement job adjustments to support them to return to and/or stay at work. If taking time away from work is what's best for the individual, provide flexible working and leave arrangements.

Check out the Australian Human Rights Commission's Workers with mental illness: A practical guide for managers.

6) Reduce stigma

Promote zero-tolerance from discrimination against staff who have a mental health condition. Effective stigma reduction initiatives have shown to improve overall organisational culture. Encourage senior leaders and managers to speak openly about mental health in the workplace by actively endorsing and participating in activities and events aimed at reducing stigma. Organisations such as Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) can also link your workplace in with a lived experience speaker to share their personal experience and reduce stigma around speaking up about mental health concerns.

MENTAL HEALTH
AT WORK

Mentally healthier workplaces during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, the way we work and the way we relate to others. It has also brought unprecedented challenges and disruptions to workplaces. It's natural for individuals to feel a range of emotions at this time.

There are a range of resources available to help your workplace support the mental health and wellbeing of your workers and create a mentally healthier workplaces during COVID-19.

Check out the series of evidence-based, easy to use guides created by the National Mental Health Commission, in conjunction with the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance. Resources have been developed for sole traders, small business, as well as medium to large business. Access these guides from the Mental Health Commission's website.

There are also a range of telephone and online mental health supports that you can promote within your workplace, including:

- The ACT Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing during COVID-19 webpage
- The Australian Government's Head to Health COVID-19 Support website
- Beyond Blue's Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service, including its 24/7 helpline: 1800 512 348
- E-Mental Health in Practice Managing Your Mental Health Online During COVID-19 Factsheet for a comprehensive list of online supports.

It's important to keep good communication going within your workplace, support each other and encourage help seeking if needed.

Get in touch!

If you'd like further information on how you can create a mentally healthier workplace by becoming a Healthier Work recognised workplace, please get in touch with us!

Web: www.healthierwork.act.gov.au   Email: healthierwork@act.gov.au